

## HANFORD TANK WASTE REMEDIATION SYSTEM

ECOLOGY AND EPA RESPOND TO USDOE PROPOSAL TO  
MODIFY HANFORD TRI-PARTY AGREEMENT

*U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) want your input on the proposed U.S. Department of Energy (USDOE) Tank Waste Remediation System (TWRS).*

*TWRS is USDOE's proposal to clean up and dispose of Hanford's single-shell and double-shell tank waste. The goal is to safely and efficiently analyze, retrieve, treat, and dispose of all of Hanford's tank wastes. TWRS activities include tank waste characterization, waste retrieval technology development, tank safety, storage, pretreatment, and vitrification leading to the permanent disposal of both low and high-level radioactive wastes.*

*EPA and Ecology are evaluating and responding to the USDOE TWRS proposal. USDOE presented the proposed changes to Hanford's tank waste cleanup on March 31, 1993. EPA, Ecology, and USDOE will negotiate the proposal from April 1 to September 30, 1993.*

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**WHY WAS TWRS DEVELOPED?**

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USDOE developed TWRS to integrate the major projects involved in managing and cleaning up Hanford's tank wastes. In 1987, the Hanford Defense Waste Environmental Impact Statement (HDW-EIS) described USDOE's plans for treatment and disposal of Hanford tank waste.

In 1989, EPA, Ecology, and USDOE signed the Hanford Federal Facility Agreement and Consent Order, also known as the Hanford Tri-Party Agreement (TPA). This agreement is a 30-year blueprint for cleaning up the radioactive and chemical wastes at the Hanford Site. Enforceable milestones are used to keep the program on schedule. The milestones relate to the work needed to bring the Hanford Site into compliance with federal environmental laws. When signing, USDOE believed it could implement the plan outlined in HDW-EIS.

Since 1989, several factors have affected the Hanford Tri-Party Agreement. B-Plant, one of the original production facilities on site, was to become a pretreatment facility for tank waste. In 1992, USDOE recognized the need for new pretreatment

facilities to replace B-Plant. Tank safety issues also became apparent, indicating the need to address single-shell tank waste. USDOE decided a re-evaluation of the tank waste remediation systems was necessary. There are also questions about two waste treatment and disposal methods: grout - a cement-like mixture to dispose of low-level waste in large underground vaults, and vitrification - glassification of high-level waste. Now in 1993, the three agencies question whether the cleanup can occur as outlined in the Hanford Tri-Party Agreement.

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**EPA AND ECOLOGY CONCERNS**

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EPA and Ecology believe that USDOE's TWRS proposal may delete any USDOE commitment to completing cleanup of Hanford's tank farms within the 30-year period outlined in the Hanford Tri-Party Agreement. Ecology and EPA have asked for additional cleanup to be done on the Hanford Site as initial tradeoffs to the USDOE TWRS delays. These include decontaminating and decommissioning of major site facilities and old reactor sites along the Columbia River, swift cleanup of the North Slope and Arid Lands Ecology Reserve, and other cleanup activities.

Under TWRS, USDOE has proposed that Ecology and EPA agree to the development of only near term milestones, not long term goals. Doing so would leave Hanford tank farm cleanup activities open ended, and would take away the Hanford Tri-Party Agreement's effectiveness and enforceability in regulating the cleanup process. Ecology and EPA believe enforceable dates are needed to meet the 30-year goal of the Hanford Tri-Party Agreement.

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**HOW WILL TWRS BE DISCUSSED?**

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Negotiations among EPA, Ecology, and USDOE about specific details of TWRS will begin May 25 and end September 30, 1993. Additionally, EPA and Ecology have identified other major areas of the Hanford Tri-Party Agreement which they feel must be addressed during the course of negotiations. Ecology and EPA have outlined three categories to be added to the negotiations: 1) TWRS, 2) Environmental Restoration, and 3) Tri-Party Agreement.

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## HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

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You are invited to comment on the Tank Waste Remediation System and Hanford Tri-Party Agreement negotiations through September 30, 1993. Public meetings will be held in the communities listed below to talk with you about USDOE's proposal and the status of negotiations. For more information contact Mary Getchell, Washington Department of Ecology, P.O. Box 47600, Olympia, WA 98504-7600 (206) 459-6862, or Hanford Cleanup 1-800-321-2008.

**May 10, 1993** Tank Waste Remediation System Public Meeting, Portland, 7:00 to 10:00 p.m.

**May 11, 1993** Tank Waste Remediation System Public Meeting, Hood River, 7:00 to 10:00 p.m.

**May 17, 1993** Tank Waste Remediation System Public Meeting, Seattle, 7:00 to 10:00 p.m.

**May 19, 1993** Tank Waste Remediation System Public Meeting, Spokane, 7:00 to 10:00 p.m.

**May 24, 1993** Tank Waste Remediation System Public Meeting, Tri-Cities, 7:00 to 10:00 p.m.

An open house will be conducted before each public meeting, from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. The Tank Waste Remediation System Open House will begin at 4:00 p.m., the Environmental Restoration and Hanford Tri-Party Agreement Open Houses will begin at 5:00 p.m.

